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TAGS: PREL PHUM PTER TU IZ ADANA  
SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTATION TRAILING LEGISLATION  
IN SE TURKEY

1.(SBU) Summary: Southeast Turkey human rights contacts report a positive change in relations between GoT authorities in some southeast areas and community leaders, but note that implementation of recent EU-related reform packages has been inconsistent. Southeast Turkey contacts also report the continued desire of the majority of the region's Kurdish population for a general amnesty for PKK/KADEK/KHK . End Summary.

2..(SBU) Syriac Christian contacts in the Midyat region of Mardin province told AMCONSUL Adana PO and Embassy Ankara econoff that their community's relations with authorities had improved somewhat in the last few months. However, many issues, such as the continued occupation by village guards of abandoned homes in the region, prevented the successful return of Syriac Christians who fled the region in the 1990s due to the PKK-related conflict. . A senior religious leader said that a few people were trying to return from western Europe, but progress was slow and most efforts were best characterized as "exploratory" for now. He said some local churches are being assessed slowly for reconstruction or remodeling by their local congregation members, but village guards and some police are hampering these efforts. Overall, community members whom the U.S. diplomats saw said that the new reform packages had produced a calmer atmosphere in the area, but implementation was yet to be forthcoming in any conclusive fashion.

3.(SBU) Syriac community and religious leaders said they feel far freer when visiting Syriac communities and monasteries in Syria than they do in their own community in Turkey. They also said that the recent thawing of relations with the GOT seemed linked to efforts by the prior governor, who departed in December 2003 to assume the governorship in Bingol. Their relationship with the new governor is still a question mark. They also noted that many congregation members report regularly to community leaders that the real force behind the pressure on the community stems from Army and Jandarma forces, as well as their village guard counterparts. The community leaders wondered whether these influences might be limiting local Islamic leaders' efforts to pursue a more amicable relationship with the Syriac community. They also reflected that Islamic leaders from elsewhere in Turkey have visited the area's Syriac monasteries quite openly in recent years, limiting the religious aloofness to a local phenomenon.

4.(SBU) A Diyarbakir human rights NGO contact said that little has changed in the human rights situation in the city and province. He noted particular Turkish police (TNP) and Jandarma sensitivity to, and physical crackdowns on, gatherings of any groups larger than 5-10 individuals. He said the TNP/Jandarma quickly resort to violent disruption of any gatherings in Diyarbakir that involve political speech. A gathering that focuses on social demands, such as better housing or health care, usually will only be encircled and watched by security forces, but the use of a Kurdish word or display of a banner denoting a political affiliation is often the trigger for a crackdown. He described the use of truncheons and nightsticks, as well as water

cannons, by security forces as the most frequently used recent control tactics.

5.(SBU) This same contact said that security authorities routinely fail to inform detainees of their right to attorney representation, or only do so almost a day after arrest and interrogation. There are also numerous accounts in recent months of arrestees being discouraged from exercising that representation right when requesting it.

16. (SBU) He said that the Diyarbakir Kurdish language institute is close to opening its doors and will probably be the region's largest. The institute will focus on Kermanji instruction and will not feature Zaza education materials. The institute does not seem to face the zoning obstacles encountered by its Sanliurfa counterpart recently. It will use a curriculum drawn from the Istanbul Kurdish language institute. He predicted considerable interest in the institute's curriculum for written language among better-educated Kurds, explaining that this group is "curious after the language has been suppressed for the last fifteen years." Nevertheless, he said that he doubted many parents would seek Kurdish written education for their children, opting instead to devote those language instruction resources to a foreign language, mentioning English and German as examples.

17. (SBU) Finally, the contact expressed a broad regional Kurdish sympathy for declaration of a general amnesty for the PKK/KADEK/KHK. He said there is no way out for the organization without an amnesty. If they are attacked, they will have no choice but to use violence, and will choose to fight rather than surrender. He said that he feared a return to violence in southeast Turkey in the spring because he foresaw the likelihood of an attack on the PKK as weather improved in a few months. This prospect deeply concerned him and he predicted it would set the region's development back even further and deepen the sense of depression that he said pervades southeast Turkey.

8.(SBU) A Cizre/Silopi religious leader without political affiliation who is a longtime Embassy and Consulate contact echoed desires for a general amnesty for the PKK/KADEK/KHK, saying people "want their children to come back from the mountains, but do not want them to betray the Kurdish cause to do so." He maintained that few PKK/KADEK/KHK cadres had actually engaged in violence and should be welcomed back into Turkey without question. As for organization leaders, he said that they did not deserve to be punished severely for their actions either. "We should just see everyone in the southeast give up their arms, go back to their villages and return to the fields together now so that we can move on and put our past behind us," he said.

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